

Message Text

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ORIGIN EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-07
LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 HA-05 H-01 /054 R

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-----114756 261218Z /14

R 260203Z NOV 77

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS:ELAB, TH

SUBJECT: VISIT OF THAI LABOR LEADERS

1. AFTER ATTENDING A BRIEFING BY UNDER SECRETARY HABIB OF FOREIGN LABOR LEADERS WHO WILL BE ATTENDING THE AFL/CIO CONVENTION IN LOS ANGELES, THE THAI DELEGATION VISITED EA/TIMBS. DELEGATION CONSISTS OF MS. SOMCHAN INTARO (PRESIDENT, THAI KURABO LABOR UNION), PAISAL THAMATCHAINUN (PRESIDENT, METROPOLITAN ELECTRICAL AUTHORITY WORKERS' UNION), AND SUNTHORN KAEWNETER (EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER ETO UNION). INTERPRETER WAS MS. RUCHIRAWAN MEEMESKUL.

2. MS. SOMCHAN SAID SHE HAD BEEN BRIEFED BY GENERAL KRIANGSAK BEFORE HER DEPARTURE REGARDING THE FUTURE OF THAI LABOR UNIONS. KRIANGSAK PROMISED TO PERMIT THE REESTABLISHMENT OF THE LABOR CONGRESS OF THAILAND AND HE WOULD PROVIDE LABOR REPRESENTATION IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. (IN FACT MS. SOMCHANG AND MR. PAISAL ARE NOW TWO OF THE FOUR LABOR REPRESENTATIVES IN THE ASSEMBLY.) MS. SOMCHAN
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SAID KRIANGSAK ALSO SHOWED A STRONG INTEREST IN SEEKING GREATER COOPERATION AMONG ASEAN LABOR UNIONS. SUNTHORN SAID THAT EXCHANGES ARE ALREADY UNDERWAY WITH MALAYSIAN UNIONS AND THERE ARE SOME TIES WITH PHILIPPINE UNIONS.

3. MS. SOMCHAN REVEALED THAT KRIANGSAK ALSO TOLD HER THAT WHILE THE NEW GOVERNMENT WOULD BE MORE UNDERSTANDING AND

FLEXIBLE TOWARDS LABOR ISSUES, STRIKES WOULD NOT BE PERMITTED.

4. ALL THREE LABOR REPRESENTATIVES DESCRIBED THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE NEW KRIANGSAK REGIME AS HOPEFUL BUT SKEPTICAL. PAISAL, IN PARTICULAR, SHOWED A DISTINCT LACK OF ENTHUSIASM. WHEN PAISAL WAS ASKED ABOUT HIS UNION'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS FORMER EGAT DIRECTOR AND NOW MINISTER OF INDUSTRY KASEM CHATIKAWAMT HE AT FIRST DECLINED COMMENT AND THEN SAID HE WAS "TOO CAPITALIST AND ANTI-LABOR".

5. THE DELEGATION WAS BRIEFED ON ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST IN HUMAN RIGHTS IN THAILAND AND A DISCUSSION OF GSP AND RISING U.S PROTECTIONIST SENTIMENT TOWARDS FOREIGN GOODS DISPLACING AMERICAN WORKERS ALSO ENSUED. THE DELEGATION VISITS NEW YORK, ATLANTA AND NEW ORLEANS BEFORE WINDING UP AT AFL-CIO CONVENTION IN LOS ANGELES. VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: VISITS, LABOR UNION OFFICIALS, MEETINGS, LABOR UNIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 26-Nov-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE283094
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: LLROCKE:LGR
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770439-0190
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19771116/aaaaanlh.tel
Line Count: 81
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: e7835211-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 442756
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VISIT OF THAI LABOR LEADERS
TAGS: ELAB, TH, AFL-CIO
To: BANGKOK
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/e7835211-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009